



What is the treatment for Hepatitis A?

There are no specific medicines to treat Hepatitis A. Generally, rest and supportive care is the treatment.

How can Hepatitis A be prevented?

The most effective way to prevent the spread of Hepatitis A is careful handwashing. Make sure you always wash with soap and warm water:

- After using the toilet;
- After changing diapers;
- Before preparing foods; and
- Before eating.

Infected people **should not** handle food during their contagious stage.

Household members, daycare contacts or others in close contact with an infected person are at increased risk. They should seek medical attention immediately.

Food workers are not considered to be at increased risk for infection unless they already are in a high-risk group.

Is there a vaccine for Hepatitis A?

Yes, there is a vaccine to prevent this serious illness. However, the vaccine is not recommended unless you:

- Are traveling to a developing country;
- Have children over 2 years old who live in communities with high rates of Hepatitis A infections, or who live in communities with periodic outbreaks of Hepatitis A;
- Have a chronic liver disease;
- Have Hepatitis C infection;
- Have a chronic clotting factor disease;
- Are an illegal drug user;
- Are a man who has sex with other men.

What else can I do to prevent Hepatitis A?

Remember, washing your hands often with soap and warm water helps stop the spread of disease.



For more information on disease prevention call:
(803) 898-0861

For more information on food safety call:
(803) 898-0640



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A Guide to Hepatitis A

avoiding foodborne illness

Sources

Symptoms

Prevention

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease caused by the Hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A infection can be passed from person to person or one can become infected by eating food contaminated with the virus.

How is Hepatitis A spread?

The Hepatitis A virus is passed in the stools/bowel movements of people with recent Hepatitis A infections.

Hepatitis A can be spread by the infected person to other people:

- By unclean and poorly washed hands;
- By eating or drinking the food handled by the infected person.

In some cases, Hepatitis A can be spread by:

- Eating raw or undercooked shellfish harvested from contaminated water; or
- Sexual contact.

What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?

The symptoms of Hepatitis A may include:

- Tiredness
- Poor appetite
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Urine may become dark in color
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)

Not everyone who is infected will have symptoms.



How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can appear 2 to 6 weeks after exposure. Most people will experience symptoms within 3 to 4 weeks.

Adults who do have the symptoms may feel ill for several weeks. Most people recover within a few weeks.

Who gets Hepatitis A?

Anyone can get Hepatitis A, and the infection is common in children.

High-risk groups are:

- Travelers to developing countries
- Individuals with:
 - Chronic clotting factor disorder
 - Chronic liver disease
- Men who have sex with men
- Illegal drug users

How long is an infected person able to spread the virus?

People recently infected with the Hepatitis A virus can spread the disease to others even if they have no symptoms. The contagious period begins about 2 weeks before the symptoms appear and continues to one week after the onset of jaundice.

Do past infections with Hepatitis A make a person immune?

Once an individual recovers from Hepatitis A, that person is immune for life.

Is there anything a person can take if he/she has been exposed to Hepatitis A?

See your doctor. He will decide if you should receive an Immune globulin shot. This is a preventive immunization that can be used if it has been less than 2 weeks since exposure. It is given to household members and close contacts of the Hepatitis A patient.

Sometimes Immune globulin is given to persons who have eaten food prepared by a person with Hepatitis A. This is usually only given if an infected hepatitis food handler:

- Did not wash his hands well;
- Practiced poor personal cleanliness;
- Had diarrhea; or
- Served food that was not cooked before serving.

